The Progressive Review

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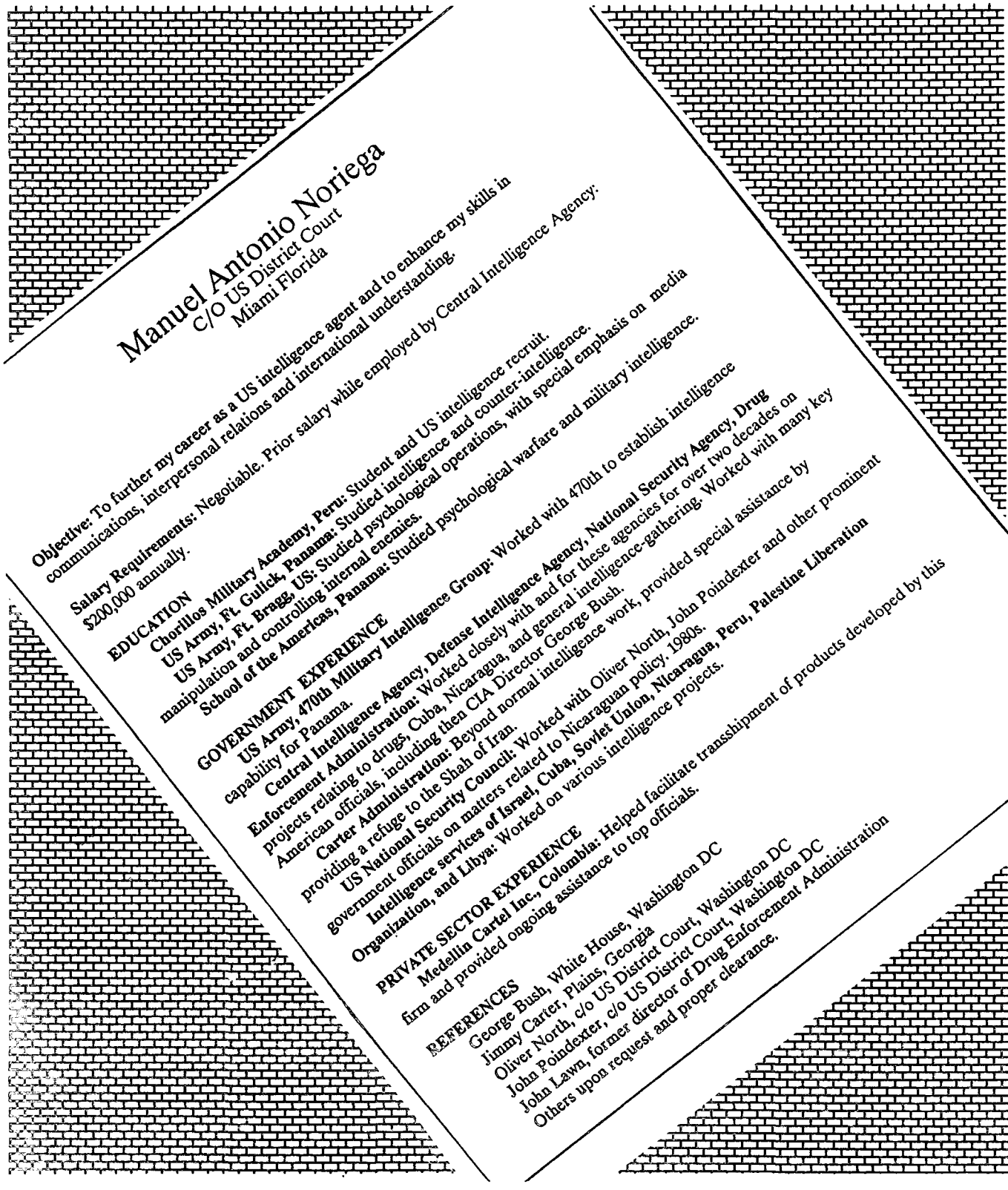

Manuel Antonio Noriega
C/O US District Court
Miami Florida

Objective: To further my career as a US intelligence agent and to enhance my skills in communications, interpersonal relations and international understanding.

Salary Requirements: Negotiable. Prior salary while employed by Central Intelligence Agency: $200,000 annually.

EDUCATION
Chorillos Military Academy, Peru: Student and US intelligence recruit.
US Army, Ft. Gulick, Panama: Studied intelligence and counter-intelligence.
US Army, Ft. Bragg, US: Studied psychological operations, with special emphasis on media manipulation and controlling internal enemies.
School of the Americas, Panama: Studied psychological warfare and military intelligence.

GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE
US Army, 470th Military Intelligence Group: Worked with 470th to establish intelligence capability for Panama.
Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, Drug Enforcement Administration: Worked closely with and for these agencies for over two decades on projects relating to drugs, Cuba, Nicaragua, and general intelligence-gathering. Worked with many key American officials, including then CIA Director George Bush.
Carter Administration: Beyond normal intelligence work, provided special assistance by providing a refuge to the Shah of Iran.
US National Security Council: Worked with Oliver North, John Poindexter and other prominent government officials on matters related to Nicaraguan policy, 1980s.
Intelligence services of Israel, Cuba, Soviet Union, Nicaragua, Peru, Palestine Liberation Organization, and Libya: Worked on various intelligence projects.

PRIVATE SECTOR EXPERIENCE
Medellin Cartel Inc., Colombia: Helped facilitate transshipment of products developed by this firm and provided ongoing assistance to top officials.

REFERENCES
George Bush, White House, Washington DC
Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia
Oliver North, c/o US District Court, Washington DC
John Poindexter, c/o US District Court, Washington DC
John Lawn, former director of Drug Enforcement Administration
Others upon request and proper clearance.

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The Sixteen Worst Reasons for Invading Panama

1. Because that's the way they do it on TV

The Panama invasion appears to have been modelled, like its Granadan precursor, on the television miniseries. The public has lost its taste for long books and long wars. A week or two of bombs, bombast and body bags is just about right. In fact, only when viewed as political entertainment (or disinfotainment, as Paul Krassner put it) does the invasion make any sense -- much as Henry V, according to Trevelyan, revived the Hundred Years' War "to busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels."

Bush and his advisors used many devices usually found only in television and in movies of the Stallone-Eastwood-kickboxing ilk. For example, only in bad fiction would:

- A president send 24,000 cops to make one drug bust -- and without a warrant.
- The United Nations and the Pope come out as the bad guys.
- The evil emperor have a photo of Hitler stashed in his closet.
- The dictator belong to a satanic cult.
- A supposedly democratic republic kill hundreds of people, level buildings, leave thousands of citizens homeless and hundreds of stores looted, in order to hunt down one villain.
- The good guys ignore the diplomatic conventions of centuries and invade the home of a foreign ambassador, harass various diplomats and blare continuous rock music outside the Papal Nunciature.
- A military spokesman portentously announce that the bad guy had been with a prostitute the evening of the invasion.

It's not, of course, certain that a number of these things happened at all, or why, if they did, they were given such prominence. For example, one observer of Latin American coups has pointed out that the incriminating document or photo is a familiar adjunct to such affairs -- and often an imaginary one. Little has been heard of the Hitler portrait since it served its convenient purpose as a hatebite for the American viewing audience. And presuming it existed, it was at least in the closet. According to Kevin Buckley. who is writing a book about Noriega for Simon & Shuster, Noriega kept under glass on his desk three other mementos that the American military and media chose to ignore: in between the photos of Pope Pius XII and Pope John XXIII was the business card of talk show host John McLaughlin, whom Noriega described to Buckley as "very honest." Since the semiotics of Noriega was of more than passing interest to the Bush league and the media it seems we deserve an explanation of this remarkable assortment of artifacts.

Similarly, a strong effort was made to portray Noriega as a satanist, but little attention was given to the theological complexities of the general. In what may be the first instance of alleged witchcraft playing such a role in international affairs since the burning of Joan of Arc, the media (the *New York Times* was an exception) had a field day, with such headlines as the *Washington Post's* reference to "Noriega's lair of magic."

In fact, it appears that Noriega, like many other Latin Americans, practiced a form of pantheism. He actually had in his quarters three shrines. One was a Catholic chapel complete with silver implements for mass, a priest's robe and a bench with a velvet-covered knee rest.

Elsewhere Noriega practiced a variety of Condomble, a Brazilian offshoot of Santeria, a centuries-old, and essentially benevolent, religion mixing African tribal belief with saint-oriented Catholicism.

Another room was reserved for Palo Mayombe, a more aggressive theology aimed at harming or destroying evil or evil persons. It was this room that inspired the 'black magic' stories.

All of this is rather alien to monotheistic North Americans. Unlike many other cultures, we tend not to pray for harm to our enemies except before football games and military engagements. But as even the Army's own 'expert' on the subject admitted: "It's possible for a good Catholic to practice both Santeria and Palo Mayombe." After all one person's magic is another person's religion, as a Trobiand Islander might point out watching the blood of Christ being passed at Holy Communion.

One can find similar practices in mainland barrios as well. A 1980 study of hispanics in Hartford, Conn., found that 11% practiced Santeria, as do a number of prominent latino entertainment stars.

Finally, there was the matter of the alleged prostitute, a truly remarkable allegation considering the source, namely the United States military, probably the world's largest contributor to red light profits. In fact, one of the early recoveries from the Panama disaster was the Ancon Inn brothel, across the street from the US Southern Command.

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The Progressive Review
1739 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington DC 20009
202-232-5544
Fax Nbr: 202-234-6222
Compuserve ID# 72067,1525
Peacenet Handle: ssmith

CORRECTION

Due to a typographical error, in the last issue we credited *Newsweek* with a comment that actually was made by Roger Ailes *according* to *Newsweek*. It wasn't a very nice comment and we apologize for the error.

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2. To Settle a score

Given the long history of Noriega's relations with the American political and intelligence establishment, one fascinating question is how this friend of Bush and others fell so badly from grace. One explanation is that Noriega stumbled by not playing his appointed role as a behind-the-scenes participant in the American war against Nicaragua. Noriega apparently thought so. He recently told at least two American observers that the turning point came in December 1985 following a meeting with John Poindexter. According to the general, Poindexter went to Panama to ask for Noriega's help in sabotaging the Contadoran peace process and in providing support and manpower to the Contras. including the use of Panama as a launching pad for attacks against Ortega. Noriega said no. Poindexter reportedly replied: "You will suffer the consequences." Noriega told Saul Landow of the Institute for Policy Studies: "Poindexter grew quite indignant, right in my office. He took out his pipe and banged it on the table. I'm not sure if he broke it. After that incident, the United States began its campaign to remove me."

Of course, Noriega, like George Bush, may not be the most reliable witness in these matters. In fact, Noriega did give the Contras some aid. Oliver North got the general to participate in the Contra supply network, which turned out to be a sort of modern triangle trade involving arms, drugs and money. The Costa Ricans were so upset by North's actions (which opened Costa Rican territory to drug trafficking) that they have banned North, Poindexter, Richard Secord, and other Iran-Contra figures from the country.

Given Costa Rica's reputation as the golden democracy of the south, one might have imagined the American press would have been interested in this story. Yet, according to the media watchdog *Extra,* most ignored the news completely despite a long AP dispatch being available to them. A few, such as the *Washington Post,* ran it as an 'In Brief' item but the *New York Times* and all three networks failed to mention it.

3. Because Panama declared war on the US

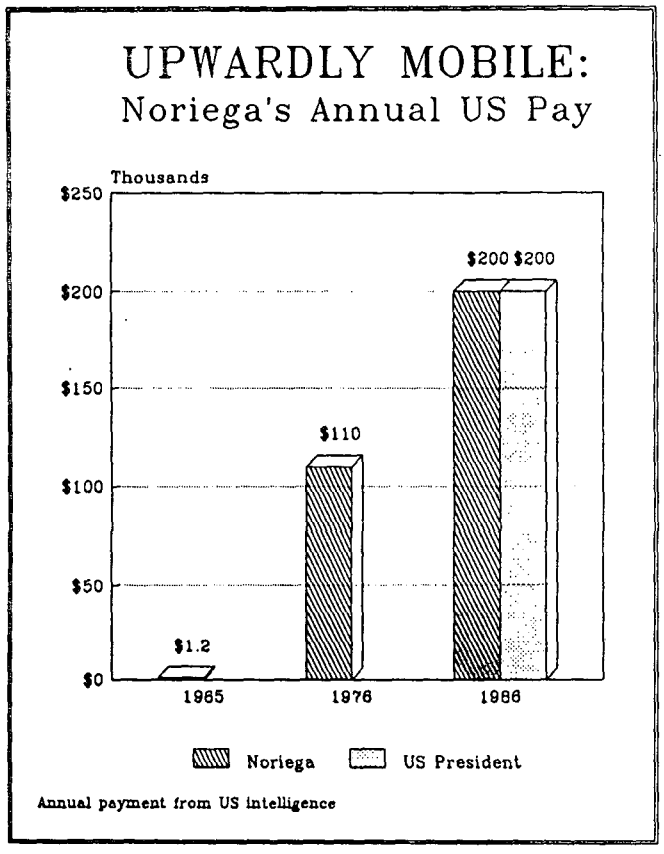
The problem with this explanation is that it is simply not true. What the Panamanian legislature said was that the United States had entered into a state of war against Panama, which is quite another thing and only slight hyperbole at that. Furthermore it was not the first time it had been said. Even the Bush administration's initial reaction was to call the Panamanian statement an insignificant act.

Only after the decision was made to invade Panama did the statement get transformed into a declaration of war.

4. Because an American soldier was killed by the PDF

Although the incident took place, it, like the so-called 'declaration of war,' gained meaning only when Bush and company were looking for rationales for the invasion. The Pentagon's initial reaction was to call it an isolated occurrence.

Also lost in the Bush invasion disinformation campaign was what had actually led to the shooting. Some days before the incident an unarmed Panamanian had been killed by a US sentry adding to local tensions. The American officer was killed by the PDF while attempting to run a roadblock, and thus engaged (under both Panamanian and American law) in an illegal act. While the police reaction might seem to us unwarranted and draconian, it is the sort of thing that still happens here, without federal response, as any black or latino resident of Miami can tell you.



5. Because Noriega did not accept the presidential election results.

To be sure, Noriega refused to permit the election returns to be counted and acted upon. But the United States is hardly in a position to express moral outrage, for at the same time Noriega was preparing to steal the election returns, the US was attempting to buy the same election with millions of CIA funds. American campaign law and political tradition does not make a moral distinction between buying and stealing an election and it's hard to see how Bush can either. We are, coincidentally, attempting to buy the election in Nicaragua at a dollar rate per voter many times that spent in this country by all the major presidential candidates combined. One estimate is that the US has funnelled $26 million in covert and overt aid to the Nicaraguan opposition since the 1984 elections -- the rough equivalent on a per capita basis of Japan, say, giving $2 billion to fund the political activities of an American party. Bush is hardly in a position to lecture on the subject of clean elections.

6. To get rid of an agent gone bad

Manuel Noriega was a high-paid American intelligence agent who went bad. The question is: what took Bush and his colleagues so long to discover it. For over 20 years, Bush's currently favorite Evil Emperor worked for the American intelligence community. He became known as

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"Rent-a-Colonel." There is copious evidence that several administrations knew what sort of person Noriega was, beginning in when the intelligence agent who recruit Noriega at a Peruvian military school reported that he had beaten a prostitute reluctant to have sex with him. Kevin Buckley, the Noriega biographer, notes that as late as May 1987, Attorney General Edwin Meese congratulated the PDF for its anti-drug efforts. DEA administrator John Lawn cited Noriega's "personal commitment to anti-drug efforts." Wrote Lawn: "DEA has long welcomed our close association and we stand ready to proceed jointly against international drug-traffickers whenever the opportunity arises."

7. To end the excesses of the PDF

The general drift of American media coverage has suggested that Noriega perverted the Panamanian Defense Forces into a sadistic operation serving his own ends. Now the rest of the story:

An American professor, R.M. Koster, notes in the *New York Times* that until 1968 the police in Panama carried no firearms. For the previous decade, however, America had been busy converting this peaceable force into a paramilitary organization, essentially creating an army where there had been none -- nor a need for any. As Koster points out, there were only two potential targets for such a force: the Panamanians themselves or the American military itself. This bizarre training operation had its first big payoff in October of 1968 when the American-created military overthrew the constitutional government of Panama for the next two decades.

One might imagine a United States government in the 1980s would have learned something from this experience. Not at all. One of the first acts of American occupation army was to put two of Noriega's sleaziest henchmen to top positions in the defense forces. One is Col. Armando Palcios Gondola, who early distinguished himself by killing a mentally retarded 18-year-old boy who had hijacked a plane and almost at once gave himself up. A later *Times* story, however, described Gondala and another officer as "said to be highly regarded for their professionalism by American military officials." No mention of the murder.

A second officer who has risen to the top in the post-invasion PDF is Col. Eduardo Herrera. Here's how Koster describes how a second new leader of the PDF handled street demonstrations:

"On July 10, 1987 troops under his command fired shotguns point blank on unarmed and peaceable citizens, blinding some. They fired tear gas into the National Sanctuary Church, where people took refuge, then rushed in and clubbed them as they choked. They broke into the homes of people who were not even demonstrating, beat and shotgunned them and hauled them off to prison for the 'crime' of displaying opposition emotions. They forced their way into hospitals, arrested anyone with shotgun wounds and pulled wounded citizens off operating tables and carted them away."

This colonel, incidentally, later broke with Noriega not on principle but because he didn't get the job he wanted.

Koster also notes that the US attorney who prepared the original charges against Noriega presented enough evidence to indict the entire Defense Forces as a "continuing criminal conspiracy." Says Koster: "Mr. Gregorie withdrew his request for an indictment after intense lobbying by the State and Defense Departments. But the case was airtight."

In short America is re-creating the same conditions that led to the rise of Torrijos and Noriega. No wonder Sr. Endara has expressed a certain ambivalence over the whole affair.

8. To reduce the flow of drugs into the US

Panama was never the major source of drugs flowing into the US. Ironically, one of the first effects of the invasion was to end the cooperation of Peru, (which is the source of 70% of the coca plants eventually processed as cocaine for the US), with US efforts to reduce drug trafficking there.

Noriega was always more of a middle man. When the US began harassing Noriega, he lost caste among Latin American drug dealers. Says Peter Reuter, drug analyst at the Rand Corporation, "It inconveniences the Colombians no doubt some, but nothing that's going to make any noticeable difference to America's drug problems. No one ever said that Panama was the exclusive, or even the dominant laundry. Laundries are available in a lot of places."

Even a representative of the DEA admitted that there would be no immediate impact on the US drug scene. Frank Shultz told Associated Press that Panama was a drug transshipment point but "not by any means a substantial amount."

9. To install a stable, democratic government

Nothing is clearer in the Panamanian invasion than that the Bush administration saw the invasion itself (with the presumed death or capture of Noriega) as the goal -- rather than what would happen afterwards. In the sophomoric thinking of the White House, the invasion and removal of Noriega was a complete act. The Bush people didn't even go to any effort to pretend otherwise:

Bush's $110,000 a Year Man

When the issue first arose, Bush tried to pretend that he never knew Noriega. When this dog wouldn't hunt he changed his story to admit casual acquaintance but little more. Unfortunately, for Bush, his lying is beginning to catch up with him, towit:

- A new book, *Divorcing the Dictator,* by Frederick Kempe, reports that at the time Bush took over the CIA, the agency was wrestling with the discovery that Noriega, who was on its payroll as well as that of the Defense Intelligence Agency, had been buying US intelligence tapes of wiretaps from several military personnel and turning them over to President Torrijos. Bush refused to prosecute the Americans involved and "opted to continue paying Noriega $110,000 annually for his CIA liaison." Kempe links this astonishing decision to the Ford administration's fear of Ronald Reagan who was denouncing Ford for aiming to give away "our Panama Canal." A juicy spy scandal was the last thing Ford needed. Bush eventually met with Noriega in Washington to deal with the issue and while Bush would deny ever knowing Noriega, Kempe found three other witnesses to the meeting, including one of whom who claims that this was the third meeting between the two.

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A Few of the Laws Bush Broke

Here are a few of the laws that George Bush broke in the course of the Panama invasion:

The US Constitution
The Constitution gives the Congress, not the President, the power to declare war. Since Vietnam, Congress has failed repeatedly to protect this power, encouraging the White House to engage in unconstitutional hostilities. Congress has not even been particularly forceful in enforcing its own partial surrender of its powers, the War Powers Act, which allows the president to enter into hostilities under only three circumstances, none of which apply to Panama:

- A declaration of war
- Specific statutory authorization
- A national emergency created by attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces.

The UN Charter
The American Constitution defines the "supreme law of the land" as to include not only the Constitution itself and laws of Congress, but "all treaties made, or shall be made, under the authority of the United States."

The UN Charter is such a treaty, as is the OAS Charter and the Panama Canal Treaty. Here are a few excerpts from the UN Charter:

**** The organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members.*

**** All members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.*

**** All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.*

**** The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice.*

Charter of the Organization of American States
An excerpt:

In the event that a dispute arises between two or more American states which, in the opinion of one of them, cannot be settled through the usual diplomatic channels, the parties shall agree on some other peaceful procedure that will enable them to reach a solution.

The Nuremberg Principles
These are part of US law through an executive agreement and are set forth in the US Army Field Manual under "The Law of Land Warfare." The principles define crimes against peace and war crimes and establish responsibility for each individual whether acting under orders or not. These principles include:

**** The fact that internal law does not impose a penalty for an act which constitutes a crime under international law does not relieve the person who committed the act from responsibility under international law.*

The principles outline a number of specific crimes including:

**** Planning, preparation, initiation or waging of war of aggression or war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances.*

**** Violations of the laws or customs of war which include, but not limited to *** wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity.*

Further, the principles make complicity in such crimes a crime as well. Hence, under this principle, every member of Congress who supports Bush is a war criminal as well.

Other international law
A *New York Times* survey of legal scholars brought out these points:

- According to Bruce Zagaris, chair of the American Bar Association panel on international criminal law, the arrest of Noriega was no more legal that if the Ayatollah Khomeini had ordered the seizure on British soil of the author Salman Rushdie to be brought to Iran on charges of blasphemy.
- A senior lawyer at the World Court said, "I can't think of any really good examples unless you back in history about 2000 years. It was like the Romans leading back defeated leaders and taking them to the circus to be displayed."
- Drug trafficking and money laundering are not in the category of universal international crimes, which may be prosecuted by any nation.

Statement of Understanding, October 1977
This agreement was signed by President Jimmy Carter and Panamanian President Torrijos to augment the just-signed Panama Canal treaties. In it was agreed:

[The right to act against aggression]"does not mean, nor shall it be interpreted as the right of intervention of the United States in the internal affairs of Panama. Any United States action will be directed at insuring that the canal will remain open, secure and accessible, and it shall never be directed against the territorial integrity or political independence of Panama."

Some of this information comes from the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute.

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The Pope & the Episcopalian American Prince

While the Bush administration's attitude towards the United Nations and the Organization of American States sadly comes as no surprise, the unprecedented abuse and psychological warfare against the Vatican is somewhat startling. Even the Polish communists, when they were still in control, treated the Pope with a certain amount of caution and respect.

This aspect of the Panamanian invasion deserves more attention than it has received. It is possible that the Bush reaction stemmed, in part, from a preppie president's view of Catholicism as a lower class religion. What may have happened was that the Bush administration was surprised by Noriega seeking refuge in the papal nunciature and reacted with primal outrage at the thought of a bunch of Poles, Italians and Irishmen messing with the foreign policy of an Episcopalian American prince.

To understand the symbolism of blaring rock music continuously outside the nunciature, however, it helps to consider the reaction within this country should the home or office of a rabbi or priest be treated in a similar fashion. The matter would be swiftly turned over to the police and handled as an anti-Semitic or anti-Catholic incident by the bias squad.

To Bush and the media the rock music was at worst a sort of Skull and Bones prank. But Gannett News Service quoted a specialist in ear disorders as saying: "We're attempting to do with music what we can't do with bullets. Chronic noise exposure creates enormous amounts of stress in people. elevated blood pressure levels and, in extreme cases, psychological aberrations, are also created by too much noise."

Given the spirit the zero tolerance toward drugs and other forms of deviance from the Bush's view of the world, it would not have been surprising if the President and his advisors had considered military action against the Vatican as well ("82nd Airborne Seizes Swiss Guard HQ"). In which case we can be glad that Lee Atwater was around to point out that while Catholics may be morally deficient they do vote in large numbers.

But there may be more than simple prejudice at work here. One scholar of America's episodic concern over drugs, psychiatrist David Musto of Yale, points out an interesting correlation between these cycles of concern and waves of hatred against nonwhites and newly immigrated ethnic groups. There is a long tradition of America responding to such pressures by creating a negative social image of the newcomers. Thus, for example, the characterization of the Irish as drunkards and so forth.

One of the major demographic changes in the US today is the rapid rise of latino America. The administration's disproportionate interest in Central America makes little sense in terms of military strategy or geo-politics. In psychological terms, however, it may be seen as allowing the American white right to express ethnic hostilities not permitted in domestic politics.

Further, it is probable that the administration is just as concerned about the threat of liberation theology as it is about Castro, Noriega or Ortega. Heads of states come and go (or can be assassinated) but progressive Catholicism remains a major obstacle to administration policy in Latin America.

Nobody talks about it much but actions are telling, witness the administration's little interest in dealing with the murders of priests and nuns, even American ones, by its Latin American allies.

• Guillerno Endara, the man designated to lead Panama to freedom, was informed of the invasion at midnight, a couple of hours before the attack began. He told the *Washington Post* that the news was "like a kick in the head. It was not the best thing I would have thought. We were not really consulted. *** It is a shaky government. I took over a government of a country invaded by another country. There was total anarchy. This is the first time a government has to start from point zero." Endara added: "I would have been happier without an intervention. I could have gone into a depression over the invasion. I probably would have worked out some details in advance, like the matter of public order."

• The day after the invasion a Pentagon official told CNN that the mopping up operations would take two or three days. The next day the estimate had been revised to five to ten days. By the day after New Year's Bush and company had clearly become bored and frustrated with the havoc they had wrought and began bringing the troops home. As entertainment, the war was over. Only the dead, wounded, homeless, hungry, looted stores, ruined buildings, shattered economy and shaky government remained. Noriega was then still at large.

10. Because Noriega was a murderer

He was, but in the panoply of murderers with whom the American government gladly does business, he was a piker. He could not hold a candle to Pinochet, for example, nor, of course, to the leaders of China with whom the Bush administration is rushing pell-mell to resume normal relations. Further, the highest estimate I've seen of people killed for whom Noriega can be held accountable is about 200. Even using the US military's suspect figures, the Bush administration killed more

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Who is Endara?

Next to finding out how many Panamanians were killed in the invasion, this is the question that interests the American media the least. Endara, who has no political party of his own, got to lead the coalition in this year's elections because he had fewer enemies than the other potential choices. A *US News & World Report* brief item last May did note that Endara had served for ten years as a top aide to Armulfo Arias Madrid who was three times elected and three times deposed (by the US) as president of Panama. Arias was described in US intelligence reports at the time as a "fascist," according to Doug Ireland of the *Village Voice,* who expelled West Indians from Panama, met with Hitler and "reached some understanding with the Rome-Berlin axis."

Panamanians in a few days than Noriega had in his lifetime. How many more is not known at this writing because, significantly, neither the President nor the media think it very important. One observer has noted that Panama city's morgues and funeral homes could handle 700 bodies at one time and that they were filled to overflowing. That doesn't include the dead elsewhere.

11. To make Panama safe for American corporations

There is a lot of talk these days of rebuilding the Panamanian economy. Seldom is it mentioned that the country, until the mid-1980s, had a per-capita income more than twice that of its Central American neighbors and was a major western banking center with deposits of $50 billion. While Noriega is responsible for some of the decline since then, it is indisputable that America's trade sanctions and withdrawal of aid played the major role. In short we are talking about rebuilding what we destroyed. Now American big business is salivating at the thought of a return of American corporate colonialism. The *New York Times* notes that Panamanian authorities have "decided against extensive government intervention through public works programs. Instead, the intention is to anchor reconstruction efforts in a revived private sector."

In the old days, Panama was the company country of United Fruit (now United Brands and still Panama's largest employer). But more than a hundred other American corporations have interests there including Xerox, IBM, Kodak and Citicorp. These are probably the real beneficiaries of the Panamanian invasion.

12. Because Noriega had to be brought to trial

Not even the Bush administration thought so in the recent past. In fact efforts have been made over the past two years to negotiate the departure of the general to a third country.

These wretched republics cause me a great deal of trouble

TR Roosevelt

I am going to teach the Latin Americans to elect good men

Woodrow Wilson, upon sending Marines to Vera Cruz, 1914

13. Because it's worked in the past.

Indeed it has. This attack was America's sixth invasion of Panama and 46th armed intervention in Latin America.

14. Because the war on drugs was flagging

The invasion of Panama was just what the war on drugs needed. The very week of the invasion, *US News & World Report* ran a pessimistic report on that war citing among other things the following:

- Despite record seizures, cocaine prices remain less than half their 1984 levels. Retail purity, meanwhile, has doubled.
- Crop eradication programs "are a flop." For example, in Bolivia the government destroyed 3600 acres of coca in 1988 compared with only 500 acres in 1986. Over the same period, however, coca harvests increased 20%.
- Planes and ships are no longer the main problem for border patrols, despite the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been spent on their interdiction. Now drugs are coming in commercial-container cargo. It can take a full day to inspect just one of the 8 million containers that arrives yearly. Only about 4% get inspected at all.
- Navy interdiction efforts have produced only 40 seizures in the past two years, costing the government about $1 million a seizure.

In addition, there have been increasing defections from the war on drugs, including two federal judges and a US congressman. The *New York Times* reported that the drug wars were having a major effect on the court system, quoting one chief state supreme court justice as saying, "It is the most devastating thing that has faced the court in recent times."

And shortly after the invasion the National League of Cities came out with a report that reported that fewer than ten percent of the nation's cities were making headway in their local drug wars.

The Race Factor

The American media seems totally indifferent to the racial aspects of US policy in Central America, despite the fact that three favorite recent targets -- Granada, Panama, and Nicaragua -- have in common a high percentage of non-white citizens.

This could be mere chance, but the coincidences begin to pile up. Only non-white areas of Panama City were bombed or otherwise damaged in the invasion and observers report that most of the 7000 civilians being detained by the American occupation army are non-white.

Noriega, a Mestizo, based his support in part on his appeal to Panama's non-white constituency. Endara's appeal is to the white middle and upper classes.

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What if we win?

Sen. JW Fulbright, when asked by JFK if he supported the Bay of Pigs invasion.

The invasion of Panama helped temporarily to obscure the growing evidence that the Bush-Bennett anti-drug effort is a total failure.

15. To destroy the evidence

Noriega is said to have bragged to associates that "I've got Bush by the balls." Certainly a full disclosure of Noriega's relations with Bush and other American officials over the years presents the potential of a scandal that would make the Iran-Contra affair look like a case of jaywalking -- if, indeed, the latter weren't merely the tip of the former.

It seems logical to assume that Bush hoped to kill Noriega and destroy or seize any damaging evidence.

Bush has tried to put the best face on it. When asked at one point whether he wouldn't really rather that Noriega go to a third country rather than reveal secret CIA information, Bush replied "That's history."

He then made this revealing comment: "You may get into some release of certain confidential documents that he may try to blindside the whole justice process, but the system works, so wouldn't worry about that."

One intelligence source said the danger was not just that military and intelligence secrets might fall out during the Noriega trial. There are other more mundane matters, like the audio-visual system Noriega wormed out of the US government only to have it turned into a screening facility for pornographic movies.

16. To help with next year's defense budget

On Jan. 8 the *New York Times* reported that defense officials believe that "politically popular actions like the invasion of Panama and the dispatch of a Navy aircraft carrier to Colombia *** are harbingers of a new era and arguments against sharp cuts in the Pentagon budget."

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